

I. Selligman & Selligman E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AJS Veddas AJS

Plate III



Group of Veddas of Heneboda and Bingoda

[Facing p.16 b]

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115 There were both "wild" and "village" Veddas even in the days of his youth, and the only difficulty experienced with the old man was in keeping the two classes perfectly distinct in his mind. The following facts were elicited in the course of three interviews, each lasting somewhat less than an hour. He stated that he was just able to walk when he came to the Eastern Province, and that as he grew up he spent much of his time with the Veddas hunting and collecting honey. The Veddas of these days were a merry people, and with a most eloquent gesture the old man showed how they would throw dry leaves into the air and shout and dance for happiness; he said also that they were absolutely truthful. Every Vedda carried a bow and arrows and an axe; more arrows than one were carried, but it was not clear that they only carried two; it seemed that *adadi*, a word that the old man said was used to describe the number of arrows carried, may have meant a small quantity or may have been a hunting term corresponding to "brace" or "leash." The old man had seen Veddas shoot lying on their backs and holding the bow with their feet, but this was only for amusement and to show their skill, no serious shooting was done in this way. The feathers of peacocks, herons and hawks were especially used in feathering arrows; any of these birds would be shot with an ordinary arrow, and peacock was eaten as was jungle fowl, though no one would eat porcupine or buffalo; for these abstinences he could give no reason. Traps were not used. Fish were eaten, being caught by poisoning the water of pools with the bark of *damba*, *nahapata*, *pusipata* (? *Entada scandens*) and the fruit of *timbiri* (*Diospyros eubryopteris*) and *kukuruman* (*Adenanthum bicolor*). Pots and bark cloth bags were made and betel pouches of monkey skin, though even then some village Veddas had cloth betel bags, and these occasionally reached the wilder Veddas. Among the village Veddas both sexes bored their ears and the women wore ivory studs in them; whether the women of the wilder groups bored their ears and wore these ornaments was not clear, certainly the men did not. Fire was obtained from two pieces of wood by drilling.

342 The wilder Veddas of those days built no houses but lived
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115 putation when he first joined our party, but it was very soon evident that he was handier, quicker and more intelligent in every way than the other peasant Sinhalese with whom we came in contact. Still later we discovered that by his influence a large clearing had been illegally made in a remote part of the jungle near Nuwaragala, and that on account of this he was doing his best to prevent our coming in contact with the Sitala Wanniya Veddas in whose territory the clearing had been made. Although in this he played us false and caused much needless trouble we found him in other matters a perfectly trustworthy witness, and as he had associated more or less constantly with the Kovil Vanamai Veddas from the age of 10 to 20, there is every reason
 161 to accept his account of their condition 25 years ago. At this
 221 time there were about 50 families, i.e. some 200 people, who led
 621 a wandering hunting life for half of the year, during which time they lived in rock shelters and depended largely on honey; for the rest of the year they paid more or less attention to chena cultivation, growing especially maize and *kurakkan* (*Eleusine coracana*). Two or three families—not necessarily the same year after year—would usually wander and hunt together; such groups of families might also make chenas together, though five or six families would often join to make a single chena.

222 Although they had a few guns even 20 years ago, bows and
 411 arrows were in common use and much of their hunting consisted
 423 of monkey drives. There were no mixed Sinhalese and Vedda
 621 chenas then. The Arachi remembers three caves belonging to the ancestors of the present Bandaraduwa Veddas, viz. Walimbagalagalge, Ellavellagalge and Vianbendegalge. Each family was the recognised possessor of one or more rocky hills on which there were colonies of the rock bee, but the whole of the small hunting community would join to collect honey from each hill and the honey was always equally shared.

614 The Kovil Vanamai Veddas belonged to Morane and Unapane and Uru *warugi*. The latter lived apart near Uniche, i.e. between Tumpalamcholai and the coast. The Arachi states
 197 that the language has altered during the last 20 years, Tamil
 121 tending to displace Sinhalese, thus *sirakodol*, "nothing," is said

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Fig. 1. Men of mixed Sinhalese and Vedda blood from the neighbourhood of Maha Oya.

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Fig. 2. Women of Omuni

[facing p. 46]

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● 411



Fig. 1. Lower rock shelter at Dandiyagala

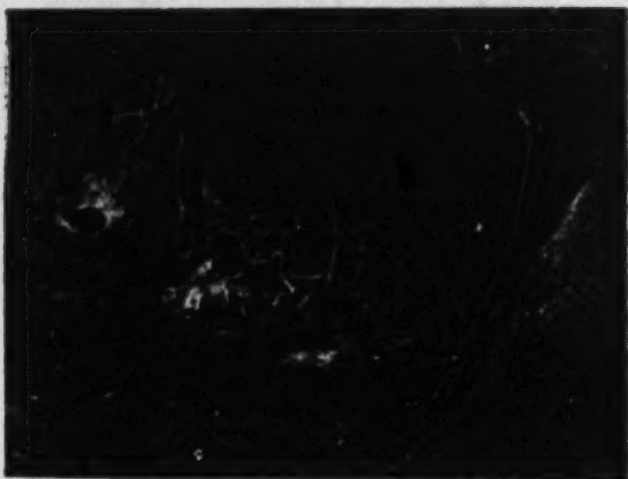


Fig. 2. Early morning scene in lower rock shelter at Dandiyagala

[facing p. 84c]

FAMILY LIFE

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clothing is younger in the case of girls than boys. The boy ⁸⁵⁵ assumes a piece of rag attached to a string in the same manner ²⁹¹ as men, while girls wear a piece of stuff fastened round their hips like a sarong. A child's first cloth is put on by its mother without any ceremony. The only toys seen were bows and arrows, and these are possessed by every male child. We never saw a little girl play with a bow and arrow, but mothers make ⁵²⁴ them for the baby boys while these are still crawling about. ⁸⁵⁷ Such toys of course are small and roughly made, but bigger boys of five years old and upwards make quite neat little bows, and shoot with them tolerably well; they do not feather their arrows. Other children were seen playing with clay and sticks; and girls frequently play with broken pots with which they pretend to cook.

As women take the children with them when they go out to dig for yams, little girls soon learn to do this, and boys would ⁸⁶⁸ begin to be taken out hunting when about ten years old. It was difficult to find out whether the fathers' or mothers' brothers took the greater part in training the boys and it seemed that a lad eager to go out hunting would be taken by any grown man, who in the very small community is usually a relative. Lads would be encouraged by their elders to shoot at a mark with their bows and arrows, and later they would stalk small birds and shoot fish¹.

When a child tells a lie he may be told "Go away, I do not believe what you say," but it appeared that even young children were usually truthful. One thing is taught the lads systematically, that is the method of collecting honey from the combs of the rock bee. Whenever the caves are conveniently situated a ladder of creepers is suspended from a tree in the jungle ⁵²⁴ above and hangs over the end of the face of rock which forms ⁸⁵⁷ the cave. On this the youths play at "honey getting." At ⁸⁶⁸ Pihilegodagalge the lads were quite willing to demonstrate to us how it was done, and the elder men showed clearly that this

¹ Nevill, in the *Tapevian* (Vol. 1, 1886, p. 189), says ".....a pellet bow is used occasionally by small boys, and birds are often shot with it, though the aim seems very uncertain." Pellet bows were seen at Henebedda, they are used regularly by the *Sikani* in the neighbourhood, and we do not doubt that the practice was introduced by them.

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considerable part of Vedda possession is a fraud, deliberately conceived and perpetrated, for knowing, as many Veddas do, of the frequency with which the Sinhalese see "devils" and "spirits" of all sorts, nothing would appear easier, if fraud were intended, than for a shaman to assert that he could see the spirits which every Vedda believes are constantly around him. 787 775

Arrows play a considerable part in the Vedda religion, two forms of arrow being used. The first is the ordinary arrow used for shooting game, the second a ceremonial arrow called *ande* with a blade 8 to 18 inches long, which is usually but not always hafted into a handle often considerably shorter than the blade¹. Both forms of arrows are used in the possession dances described in Chapter IX, but in addition to this the shooting arrow is used as a protection to infants, being commonly thrust in the ground by the side of a sleeping child when its mother is forced to leave it. We heard of this custom in several communities, and at Sitala Wanniya, where arrows were scarce, were shown a wooden bladed arrow which was said to be used in this way (figure 7 (a)); *ande* might also be made of wood when an iron blade was not available, and figure 7 (b) shows a wooden *ande* made for us at Henebedda. These facts are important as showing that the power of the arrow lies in itself and not in its iron blade. 778 411 ●

The protective power of the arrow was noted by Nevill, who stated that the Nilgala Veddas "regard the symbol of an arrow, placed by their babe, as efficient protection for it. They leave tiny babes upon the sand for hours together, with no other guard than an arrow stuck in the ground by their side. Their belief in the efficacy of this has received no shock. They never knew such a child to be attacked by wild beasts, pigs, leopards, jackals, etc. or harmed". 411 778 854

With regard to the long-bladed and short-handled ceremonial arrows, the handles of these are sometimes covered with incisions so roughly executed that they do not form a pattern and can hardly be decorative even in intention, so that probably they only serve the useful purpose of preventing the hand from 778 411

¹ These ceremonial arrows are doubtless identical with the large blades described by various authors as formerly used in shooting elephants.

² Op. cit. Vol. I, p. 289.

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(a)

(b)

Fig. 7.
Arrow with wooden blade and wooden shaft.



Fig. 8.

Arch. x 1/2

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slipping. Such ceremonial arrows are generally heirlooms, not necessarily passing from father to son but rather being handed down in apostolic succession from shaman to shaman, and among the village Veddas of Bintenne I have handled one such blade with a history running back for five generations. 411
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Figure 8 shows two ceremonial arrows which we were able to collect. Besides these we saw similar *ande* at Omuni and were told at Sitala Wanniya that Handuna had formerly possessed one. Rutimeyer has figured one of these ceremonial arrows about 14 inches long, obtained from Kaira the "senior" of the Danigala Veddas. These arrows are carefully preserved by the shaman, and just as he himself observes certain dietetic rules, avoiding eating pig and fowl which are supposed to be particularly repulsive to the *yaku*, so among those more sophisticated communities who believe in the periodical uncleanness of women, special precautions are taken to avoid the possible contamination of the *ande*¹. This is generally done by keeping them in some comparatively remote spot such as a cave or in the roof thatch. It is necessary that the shaman should hold one of these arrows in his hand when invoking Kande Yaka; he should also have one for Bilindi Yaka, though as a matter of practice Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka were often invoked using the same *ande*, another *ande* being reserved for invoking the *Nae Yaku*. Both arrows were, however, commonly held in the hands during the whole of the *Nae Yaku* ceremony, but in spite of this no confusion seemed to arise nor had the onlookers the least difficulty in saying which *ande* belonged to Kande Yaka whenever they were asked. [763]

The offering of rice in the pot would be stirred with the *ande*, and betel leaves might be ceremonially transfixed with it. Among the Veddas of Unuwatura Bubula the testing of the quality of the food provided for the *yaku* was performed with the help of the *ande*, the shaman possessed by Kande Yaka using the *ande* to remove from the pot a few grains of rice which the *yaku* in the person of the shaman several times examined before expressing his approval of the offering provided. 411
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¹ The belief in the periodical uncleanness of women has been borrowed from the Sinhalese. It did not exist in the "wild" group we met with, on the other hand we found it among all the more sophisticated Veddas, attaining a maximum where these had come under foreign influence.

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to accept offerings from Kande Yaka, and Kande Yaka must be invoked before the *Nas Yaku* to come to the offering, which should consist of coconuts, rice, areca nuts, betel leaves and, when obtainable, bananas. 775
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We consider that the beliefs so far described represent the first stratum or basis of the Vedda religion and to be of its original substance. This is not the case with the remaining portion of the religion of the Veddas of Sitala Wanniya, which relates to certain foreign spirits who have become naturalised Vedda *yaku*. The Rahu Yaku are spirits of this sort. A fire ceremony occurs in the dance by which they are invoked and there is no doubt that these *yaku* are derived from the Sinhalese demon Gini Rahu Bandar. Yet in spite of this they have acquired a Vedda history, being regarded as long dead Veddas quite unconnected with the Rahu Bandar of the Sinhalese. The story concerning them is that long ago three Vedda brothers occupied a shelter together and one day one of them returned from hunting to find a stranger in the cave with his wife. The unknown rushed away and made good his escape, but the injured husband made up a big fire and in his rage and despair jumped into it. His *yaku* is one of the Rahu Yaku, the other two being the *yaku* of his two brothers who did not, however, burn themselves to death. 776
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The help of the three Rahu Yaku is asked to cure sickness, to obtain success in hunting, and in collecting rock honey. Hunting and honey collecting both have their true Vedda patrons Kande Yaka and Dola Yaka, therefore the Rahu Yaku seem superfluous in these capacities. Further evidence as to their foreign origin is afforded by the fact that they carry "swords" (*Asadas*), a weapon unknown to Veddas except in incantations¹, and that all three are considered somewhat dangerous, and cause sickness. [441]

Indigollae Yaka, a foreign spirit (whose origin will be considered at length in Chapter VII), is looked upon as an attendant upon Kande Yaka in this community.

The names of certain spirits residing on various hills and 776

¹ Even these swords, one of which is shown in figure 11 (p. 156), had been introduced and were said to represent such.

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were generally associated with rocks and were not the spirits of the dead. There is however an exception, namely, Dehigole Yaka, whose history is as follows. A man from Dehigole, a Vedda, went to Kandy to see the king, probably Sri Vikram Rajah Sinha, the last of the Sinhalese kings, who was dethroned early in the last century. On his way back he was killed by an elephant, and now his spirit looks after the chena and prevents elephants breaking into and destroying the crops. A leafy branch is tied to a pole or dead tree in the chena, and Dehigole Yaka and other spirits are invoked, an offering of sweetmeats, jaggery, coconuts and rice cooked in coconut milk being made and subsequently eaten by the owners of the chena. There was said to be no invocation of the *yaku* of the recent dead, nor before taking honey which is obtained from trees.

LINDEGALA.

The "Veddass" described on p. 76 from Lindegala in the neighbourhood of Kallodi worship a large number of male and female spirits including the Bo Gaha Yaka and the Na Gaha Yaka¹.

As already indicated the people of Lindegala are Veddass in scarcely more than name. The most important of them, an old man with his son and son-in-law, visited us at Kallodi. The old man who is tall and presented typical Sinhalese features is a renowned *vederale* (medicine-man) and is employed by the Sinhalese for miles round. He brought with him to show us two ceremonial arrows with which he invoked the spirits. One of these arrows is of the shape of a Hindu trident, the other is of the usual Vedda shape and is notable on account of the silver leaf with which the blade is inlaid. This *ande* is shown in Plate XXV. Both of these had been presented by the Sinhalese king to one of his ancestors, apparently about 100 years ago.

¹ Although these *yaku* were spoken of in the singular there were many individuals of each species. Some of the other more important *yaku* which were worshipped were named, Watagala Wanniya, Gala Degala Wanniya, Gerugala Wanniya, Maldampala Yaka, Lapat Yaka, Eheregala Yaka, Meheregala Yaka, Komal Yaka, Walimat Yaka, Hihhangala Yaka, Mikmal Naida Yaka, Kehelpotagala Yaka, Mawaragala Yaka, Herang Yaka, Isihangala Wanniya, Muluhangala Wanniya, Gara Rajah Wanniya. These were only an insignificant fraction of the total number of *yaku* known to our oldest informant.

411 The story told us was that when this ancestor, who was a Vedda
 778 headman and a shaman of great fame, gave up his jungle life
 173 and began to cultivate, the Sinhalese king sent him the two
auds as tokens that he granted the land on which he settled to
 him and his descendants for ever. It seems that previously
 to this they had led a more or less unsettled life, or had
 perhaps been dispossessed of their own territory during the
 troubles of the period. The arrows were in fact "*selsin*" and
 were considered the equivalent of a *sannasa*, the inscribed metal
 plate or rock face on which grants of land were formerly
 recorded. Inquiry showed that it was by no means uncommon
 for a man to be given a ceremonial example of an implement of
 his trade or profession as a *sannasa*. Thus, in the Kandy
 Museum there is a beautifully worked Bull's bell (*gonminigedya*)
 given as *sannasa* to Rāntun Mudianse of Walala head of the
 Pattiya or Nilamakkara people by King Narendara Singhe of
 Kundasale who reigned 1706—1739. We may also refer to a
 ceremonial weaver's shuttle in the Colombo Museum and to the
 lacquered arrows described in Chapter XI.

776 The *Nas Yaku*, Kande Yaka, and Wanegata Yaka are con-
 775 sidered less important than the tree *yaku* and the host of *yaku*
 alluded to above. Indigollae Yaka and Rahu Yaka are
 recognised but not considered very powerful, though it was said
 that all these were formerly invoked to give success in hunting.
 The *kolamadawa* ceremony is known, very many spirits being
 invoked including Unapane Kiriamma. The *Nas Yaku* become
 attendants on some of the *yaku* mentioned in the above list and
 these are invoked first and bring the *Nas Yaku* with them, but it
 appeared that it was no longer the custom to hold a *Nas Yaku*
 ceremony within a few days of a death. Among the *Nas Yaku*
 mentioned was the spirit of the man on whom one of the last
 Sinhalese kings had bestowed the land of which the inlaid *aud*
 shown in Plate XXV is the *sannasa*. Another *yaku* greatly
 venerated is that of Kimbul Otbe, an important individual living
 a few generations ago concerning whom Nevill has written at
 some length¹.

¹ Nevill, who says that he could find no clue to his identity, still regarded Kimbul
 Otbe as "a great historical personage," for "The Sinhalese of the Eastern Province

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Plate XXV



Arms with inlaid silver Bo leaf

[facing p. 172]

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Having made arrow-heads of the shape of *ñā* leaves,
Of the shape of *ñā* leaves, from hill to hill,
From foot (print) to foot (print) of excellent number deer,
There (he) goes, my Wanniyā of the Chief Place of the hill.

Mr Parker explains that the "chief place of the hill" is its crest or summit, but in every case in which the expression *Kande* and *pala Wanniyā* occurred in an invocation our informants explained that the expression was one of the names of Kande Yaka, and they clearly regarded these words as constituting a proper name. *Wanniyā* is a common constituent of Vedda names, and has something of the significance of chief or leader. Mr Parker points out that it means "he of the Wannī" or "he of the forest track," and that it is a title given to Vedda chiefs in former times. Mr Parker considers this invocation important, "since it shows that the arrow heads were of two shapes, a narrow one with nearly parallel sides (resembling the leaf of the *añ* tree or ironwood) like some Sinhalese arrows, and a broader one (resembling the *ñā* leaf"). At the present day the heads of Vedda arrows are long and relatively narrow, that is, roughly of the shape of a leaf of the *añ* tree. We have not seen any arrow heads whose shape recalled the leaf of the *ñā* tree.

INVOCATION TO KANDE YAKA AT THE KIRIKORAHIA CEREMONY.

Sitala Wanniyā.

XVI. *Kandala aya kandala yaana yaana kanda nirinda wasi*
wasinawa. Ravand dandala aya kandi dandala randa randa gal-gala-
randa ppa ppa karippa chippala kandi mal pala Wanniyā.

King of the Hills, who continues to go from hill to hill, cause rain¹. (He is) the Wanniyā of the Chief place of the hill, who comes to fill the hock of excellent number deer, from foot (print) to foot (print), from RAVAND Dandala (the grass plain of teals) to KANDI Dandala (the grass plain of the hill)².

"*Nirinda* from *nara* and *indra*, a poetical expression meaning 'chief of men.' It is never used colloquially by Sinhalese.

"*Karippi* = *karippu* (Tamil) 'mark,' 'traces.'"

¹ "Lk. mla rala."

² "These names signify respectively 'the grass plain of the teal' and 'the grass plain of the hill.' Dr Seligmann was told that these hills named with game though on inquiry it appeared that no man had visited them or knew their situation."

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Plate 1A



Nila holding bow while reciting invocation No. XXIII. When the name of the yaka causing the illness is spoken the bow swings to and fro

[Facing p. 290]

323 In both communities it was said that men and women make pots, and of five pots bought at Bendiyagalge at different times three were said to have been made by men and two by women. Further, it was agreed that pots had been made for a very long time and our informants at Sitala Wanniya said that they were made in their grandfather's grandfather's time, the longest period we ever heard a Vedda mention. A small pot, the upper right-hand pot of Plate LXII, made by Poromala of Bingoda, has a rough chevron pattern upon it; no importance or meaning was attached to this, which was avowedly copied from a pot obtained by barter. The thick open pot without a lip shown in the lower right-hand corner was made by Poromala (Walaha) who volunteered the information that the oldest pots were lipless. The large pot in the centre of the upper row was made by his wife. The pot to the left of this was made by Poromala (Walaha) and the pot underneath this by Randu Wanniya. It is worthy of note that though many fragments of wheel-made pottery were found in the upper layers of the floor of the Bendiyagalge caves, no trace of pottery was found in the deepest layer associated with the quartz implements figured in Chapter I.

TOOLS AND WEAPONS.

411 The bow and arrow with the axe are the only iron tools used by the Veddas for the chase, for fighting, and for general domestic use. The iron arrow and axe heads are obtained by barter, as are the areca nut-cutters and strike-a-lights which most Veddas now possess. To a limited extent the areca nut-cutters are used as tools, for we have seen the final polishing and trimming of arrow shafts performed with these.

411 No spells are recited or other magic used when making axes or bows and arrows. At Henebedda the wood of the *Adiantum* (437) (*Allophylus cobbe*) is used for the bow; a sapling is peeled and shaved down until the desired amount of flexibility is obtained, it is then stained black. The bow string is made of the bast of a tree called *aralu* (*Terminalia chebula*), the same is used to bind (283) that part of the shaft of the arrow pierced by the tang of the arrow head, the binding being afterwards covered with gum or resin obtained from the timbral tree (*Dicapryos* 314) *embayotensis*.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

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resin obtained from the *timbiri* tree (*Diospyros umbropterus*). 411 ●
 The shaft of the arrow is commonly made of the wood of the
 wulan tree (*Parospermum suberifolium*). The arrow is still the 322
 almost universal cutting tool, as we had good opportunity of
 ascertaining at Henebedda. There was no knife in the com- 412
 munity, and we noticed the skill with which a deer was skinned 252
 and cut up with an arrow. The Veddas certainly desired no
 better tool, and when we pressed a butcher's knife on one of
 them in order to see how he would handle the unaccustomed
 tool, it was interesting to note how slowly he worked and how
 poor the result was compared with that he obtained with an
 arrow, which he held just above the blade somewhat as a
 European holds a penholder. No less astonishing was the skill
 employed in removing the skull cap with a few strokes of the
 axe, not only was the brain lifted out and cooked entire, but it
 was removed so neatly and cleanly that the result was more
 suggestive of an anatomical preparation than a piece of butcher's
 work.

The Veddas we met were all bad or indifferent shots, and 411
 we have no doubt that game is seldom shot at a distance
 much beyond fifteen or twenty yards, the marvellous stalking
 of the Veddas enabling them to approach within this distance.
 The bow, to which the string is securely fastened at one end, is
 carefully unstrung when not in use. To string it, this end is
 placed upon the ground, the upper end of the shaft and the
 string being held in the hands, the sole of one foot is then
 placed against the middle of the shaft which is steadied, we
 might almost say gripped, between the great toe and the second
 toe. Much of the weight of the body is thrown against the
 middle of the shaft while the hands pull down the upper end to
 which the string is quickly secured, as is shown in Plate LXIII.
 Plate LXIV shows the position of the hands and arms imme-
 diately before the arrow is released. The bowman is Handuna
 of Henebedda, who is left-handed and who in spite of being the 145
 father of a large family remains the only left-handed individual
 in the community. The length of a bow collected at Henebedda
 was 172 cm., while four arrows also obtained at Henebedda
 varied from 88 to 105 cm. in length.

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It appears that painted and lacquered arrows were sometimes presented to the Veddas by the Sinhalese kings as signs of gratitude or favour, just as ceremonial forms of other objects were presented to particular Sinhalese¹. Dr Willey told me of a lacquered bow and arrow which he heard of among a community of sophisticated Veddas, and which he was told ultimately found their way to the Kandy Museum. Among the peasant Sinhalese of Nilgala we heard of a lacquered arrow—said to have been lost recently—which, according to tradition, had been presented many generations ago to the Vedda ancestors of its last owner by one of the kings of Ceylon. With regard to the specimen in the Kandy Museum, the arrow is feathered in the usual Vedda style, the condition of the lacquer on it shows that it is of considerable age. The iron which is said to belong to it is loose, and it is entirely unlike any arrow head we have seen. Instead of having a tang it has a socket into which the end of the shaft must have fitted, and there is a shoulder or "stop" upon the iron. The bow shown us as having been acquired with the arrow was in much better condition and had a small band of silver or some metal resembling silver round it. According to the account given at the museum both specimens were procured from a priest who gave a history of the specimens which does not connect them with any Veddas².

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Traps and snares are unknown among the least sophisticated Veddas, but at Danigala we saw a small deadfall trap avowedly introduced.

HONEY.

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The importance of honey in the Vedda diet has been mentioned in Chapter IV as well as the large part it plays in barter. The honey of the *dambara* (*Apis indica*) is taken in June and July, though at other times of the year small combs are taken

¹ There is in the Colombo Museum a beautifully lacquered weaver's shuttle, presented to certain cloth makers by one of the Sinhalese kings.

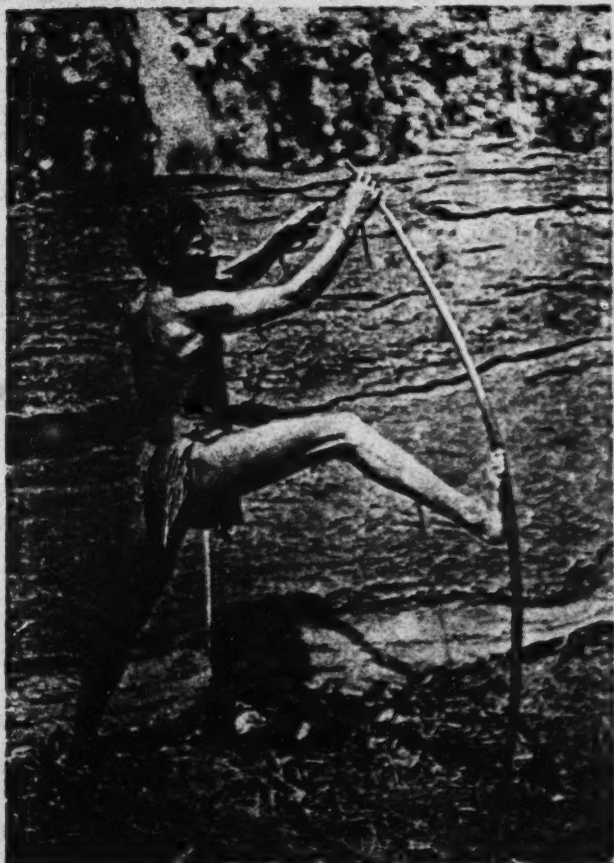
² It was stated that the bow and arrow had been found in the verandah of a disused house with some broken articles said to have been thrown there, having been taken from the *walawura* (house) of Molligoda Adigar. The house was in the Kegalle district. The villagers gave the bow and arrow to a priest who brought them to the museum.

1: Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911

AX5 Vedda AX5

Plate LXIII

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Handman of Hembedda stringing his bow

[facing p. 326 a]

L. Selligmann & Selligmann 1-3 (1897-1899) 1811
ALS Vodka ALS

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Plate LXIV



Handuna shooting

[facing p. 326 b]

COAST VEDDAS

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There are a few Veddās at Panichchenkeni, while near Vakaraī still further to the north there is a Verda settlement of considerable size. Some eight miles beyond this are two Verda settlements Parchenai and Nargantonai situated close together. We heard of other smaller settlements of Coast Veddās in the neighbourhood of Batticaloa, but these were not visited as time was short and it appeared that those Veddās we did not see differed in no respect from those we met. We were told that formerly there were Coast Veddās south of Batticaloa and we later discovered that there were, and still are, certain shrines or temples within a few miles of the coast (e.g. at Mandur), which were generally recognised as Veddā shrines at which Veddās especially worshipped. This matter has been alluded to in Chapter VIII, and here it is only necessary to point out that the religion of the Coast Veddās is strongly tinged with Tamil customs and beliefs; indeed, many Veddās had Hindu sect marks upon their foreheads. 361

Some, but not all, of the Coast Veddās know the names of the *waruḡ* to which they belong, and a few also know the names of some of the more important *waruḡ* of the Veddās inland. Uru *waruḡ* appears to be the *waruḡ* to which most of the Coast Veddās who remembered their ancestral *waruḡ* belonged, but a few men stated that they belonged to Ogamam, Kavatham, Umata or Umatam, Aembalaneduwe and Aembale *waruḡ*; the last named and the one before it probably being the same as the Aembela *waruḡ* found inland. Some of the Coast Veddās whom we questioned said they had heard of, and still knew of, certain of the old Veddā *waruḡ*, and such men were generally able to mention Morane *waruḡ* while fewer also knew of Unapane *waruḡ*. 614

The Coast Veddās have become expert fishermen and make and use various forms of nets including a cast net. They also spear and shoot fish, using a bifid iron spear-head which they have adopted from the Tamils. For shooting fish they use the usual Veddā bow, but the arrow has become a harpoon with a shaft as long as the bow into which the iron with its running line fits loosely. One of the nets used by the Coast Veddās is seen drying behind the house in the background of Plate LXIX, 226
227
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[255]

[113]



Fig. 13. Veda bow and harpoon $\times \frac{1}{2}$. Iron harpoon head $\times \frac{1}{2}$.

fig. 2, while Mr Storey's book contains an excellent photograph of these people spearing fish¹.

The length of the Veda bow and harpoon shaft shown in fig. 13 are 308 cm. and 220 cm. respectively. The bow is an extremely powerful weapon, its diameter at its thickest part being about 3.3 cm.

In spite of the perfectly obvious fact that the majority of the Veddas are more Tamil than Vedda the old Vedda pride of blood survives and some of the older Veddas denied that they intermarried with Tamils.

Children of marriages in which the *savages* of the contracting parties were known took their father's *savage*, but it seemed to be a matter of no account whether or no individuals of the same *savage* intermarried.

Everyone avoids eating fowl and all our informants both male and female denied that they ever ate it, though often suggesting that others might do so. On the other hand, one informant who bred fowls for sale summed the matter up with an emphatic "Veddas don't eat fowls." No reason was given for this abstinence but all agreed that their ancestors had not eaten fowl, though the majority of our informants admitted that they would breed fowls for sale and kill and prepare fowls for others to eat. Beef was said to be generally avoided though it was not

¹ *Hunting and Shooting in Ceylon*, London, 1907.

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element as they are in the midst of a civilized crowd. They are [18]
different beings at ease in their own forests. I have travelled by
night with Veddahs for my guides over the plains and through
the forests of Bintenne, and have been struck with their altered
demeanour. In their own hunting grounds, they are no longer
the scared and cowering creatures I have described. They are
"at home;" and seem to assert their freedom. Bows in hand,
their axes hanging from their shoulders, they stride noiselessly [481]
along, with head erect, and independent air as though they were
every one's equal, and had none to fear.

As their chief pursuit is hunting, whether for game or honey, 411 ●
their constant weapons, without which they never stir, are a bow,
two or three arrows, and a very small axe (for cutting honey- [412]
combs out of trunks of trees), shaped with a hollow in the lower
part of the blade to enable it to hang conveniently upon the
shoulder. They also carry a larger axe, stuck into the waist-
string at their back.

The bow is long, from five feet eight to about six feet six
inches in length, rudely made of tough elastic wood*—a bow,
which a muscular Englishman would bend with an effort, long [447]
practice has taught the slightly-built Veddah to string with ease;
and I have seen a boy use a bow which caused me some exertion
to bend. The strings, which are exceedingly strong, are twisted
of different kinds of bark and fibres†. The arrows, which are [283]
about a yard long, are headed with a sharp iron blade, often
nearly six inches long and an inch wide, about the formation of
which they are still as "curious" as when Knox wrote of them,
and if a blade be given them, they will now, as they did then,
grind or beat it out to the shape and thinness they most approve.‡

The method in which "they bespeak their arrows to be made," 439
and their mode of barter generally, which Tennent believes still
to exist among them, have long been exploded.§ They are not

* They chiefly use the wood of the following trees, *doonoomadala* (*Strobilanthus chinensis*), the *kekala* (*Mythocalyx zylaniensis*), a creeper called [214]
kobbléwel, or the pandéro tree.

† Chiefly the fibre of the *niyanda* (*Amisiva zylaniensis*), and the bark of
a creeper called the *areloowel*.

‡ "They are so curious of their arrows that no smith can please them.
The king once to gratify them for a great present they brought him, gave
all of them his best made arrow-blades, which nevertheless would not please
their humour. For they went all of them to a rock by a river, and ground
them into another form." Knox, part III, chap. I, p. 63 (folio).

§ "It hath been reported to me by many people, that a wilder sort of
them, when they want arrows, will carry their loads of flesh in the night;
and hang it up in a smith's shop, also a leaf cut in the form they will have
their arrows made and hang by it; which if the smith do make according
to their pattern, they will requite, and bring him more flesh; but if he make

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439 now, nor have they been for very long, so shy as to be prevented from bartering freely enough with the Singhalese, although, unless for the purpose of barter, they avoid intercourse with strangers. Their wants, however, are so few, that they rarely emerge from their forests.

224 They have the reputation of being expert with bow and arrow, and as it is only the larger game, such as elk, deer, etc., which
411 they pursue, it is very probable that with their remarkable power of creeping stealthily through the jungle, they may be able to come upon their prey unawares and do execution. But they are miserable shots at a mark. I never saw more than two decent hits made at several small "archery meetings," which I have, from time to time, got up for my own amusement and their pecuniary advantage. And with regard to the latter, I must confess that I never saw that contempt for money which Tennent
411 supposes is still existing.*

[177] The practice of drawing the bow with the feet to which Tennent also alludes as still in use, has so long ceased, that in all my inquiries—and I was very particular on this point—I could not find a single Veddah who ever witnessed it, but it is undoubted that such a mode of archery once existed, as is traditional among them.†

224 They have dogs perfectly trained to follow up and pull down the wounded deer. These they value highly; but they are of no
231 distinct breed and do not differ from the ordinary country dogs. But it would appear that at a time when hunting was of more importance to them than it is now, the dog was more valued. Knox tells us, that dogs were given "for portions with their daughters in marriage;"‡ and Percival relates, that "before the last war broke out between us and Holland, a Dutch officer sold a couple of Veddah dogs at Surat, for 400 rix dollars, about £30."§

them not, they will do him a mischief one time or another by shooting in the night. If the smith make the arrows, he leaves them in the same place where the Veddahs hung the flesh." Knox, part iii, chap. i, p. 62. *Vide* Tennent, vol. ii, part ix, chap. iii, p. 440, and note; also vol. i, part. v, chap. ii, p. 568, 2nd edition.

* "Money to them is worthless." *Vide* Tennent, vol. ii, part ix, chap. iii, p. 440, 2nd edit. I had been told that they would refuse silver, not knowing what it was, and would accept copper. But I never had a rupee refused when I tendered it; and the word "rupee" is by no means unintelligible to them. A good many years ago, I can well believe money was worthless to them, but that was long before Tennent's time.

† Tennent, vol. ii, part iv, chap. iii, p. 439. Some wild Veddahs of the Batticaloa district shewed Mr. Birch, when making some inquiries among them at my request, how the bow was drawn with the foot, but said it was never so drawn now.

‡ Knox, part iii, chap. i.

§ Percival, chap. xiii.

ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE.

127

Equally they were acquainted with tobacco and betel, for I was shown a place where the Veddas established a toll that was paid usually in these particular commodities. 276
[65]

The dog was the only domestic animal reared by the Vedda, and special names were given to these pets. 231
552

The Veddas appeared to have no knowledge of melting iron for the manufacture of their particular implements, which consisted of the bow and arrow, the spear, and the small axe, or hatchet. Arrow and spear-heads were procured by barter; the method of procedure was to clear a small space round the foot of a tree by the wayside leading to a village known to contain smiths. Here the Vedda would hang up to the branch of a tree a vessel containing honey, or a piece of meat, which would be taken by the smith, who in return would hang up an arrow-head. 411
412
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439

It was understood by both that the quantity or number of articles required would be represented by the number of parcels of meat or honey. Should the smith, however, take the meat and not leave the arrow-heads that were thus silently requisitioned, he would pay the penalty with his life, or some of his animals would be shot by the defrauded Vedda. [628]

The bow was usually made from the wood of the *Dunumadala* (*Stercospermum chelonoides*) and of the *Bignoniaceae*. It was not always of the same length, as this appears to have depended on the springiness of the wood. The arrow was generally about 4 ft. long, or as much as a man could draw the bow to. The arrow-head appears to have been small, large arrow-heads being for ceremonial purposes only. 411
[824]

Fire was obtained by spinning, under moderate pressure, a vertical rod of Welanga wood (*Pterospermum suberifolium*) on a flat piece of wood of the same species, with the point of the former surrounded by floss, or some quickly inflammable material. Later, the flint and steel were found more effective. One example of a flint and steel was shown to me at Panawa, and I tried to purchase it at the owner's valuation, but I found he was most reluctant to sell. I understood that the flint and steel, a lock of hair, and a fragment of cloth represented a title deed, these being given by a dying man to his heir, or adopted heir, as a mode or evidence of transfer. 372
[824]
423
428

137 few solitary examples of *S. urens*, but I feel confident that this last is an introduction. *Pterospermum suberifolium*—the Welanga of the Sinhalese—is very abundant.

[824
372
411] The young straight shoots of this plant supplied the Vedda arrow, while the wood was employed by them for the manufacture of "fire drills."

The distribution of *Helicteres isora* is curiously restricted to what might be termed "patches," the largest of which I found at Etmoole. *Heritiera littoralis*—the Chomanturai of the Tamils—is scarce, but occurs near Panawa and Pottuvil.

Of the Tiliaceae, I noticed that the distribution of *Halmilla* (*Berrya ammonilla*) was not very general, while its abundance or scarcity appeared to be a matter of its easy access or the reverse. This is to be expected of so valuable a timber tree.

"Vidpani" (Tamil) (*Pityranthe verrucosa*), so plentiful in the Trincomalee District, is comparatively scarce in the Vedda country. Of the Grewias, *G. tiliaefolia*, *G. microcos*, and *G. polygama* are the commonest, but the first of these is not so abundant here as in the dry zone of the Ratnapura District.

As representing the Linaceae, *Erythroxylon monogynum* may be taken as an abundant typical example. It is alleged in the Panawa Pattu that meat hung in the smoke from burning wood of this plant, if eaten produces a purgative action.

Both *Hiptage madablota* and *H. parvifolia* of the Malpighiaceae occur in the Vedda country, but in no abundance.

The bright, but pestiferous, *Tribulus terrestris*, is to be found near Pottuvil and at Panawa, in places where the soil is not too dry, but its distribution does not spread far inland.

Of the Geraniaceae I found very few examples. In some slightly moist spots, west of "Westminster Abbey," I observed *Biophytum sensitivum*, and in some of the tanks I got *Hydrocera triflora*, but in other respects, except the introduced *Acerhos bilimbi* and *A. carambola*—common in gardens—this order is poorly represented. The Rutaceae is not well represented in wild species, if we except the well-known *Feronia elephantum*, *Murraya koenigii*, and *Toddalia aculeata*. In the gardens oranges, lime, and pummalo have been introduced, but with no marked success either in the matter of quality or quantity.

137 *Sarcostemma brunonianum* occurs frequently, especially in the bush country.

Dregea volubilis is also fairly abundant near to Liyangolla and Muppane.

Of the Loganiaceæ, the well known *Strychnos nux-vomica* is most abundant. It is remarkable, in view of its being so common, that cases of children poisoning themselves by eating the seed are rarely heard of.

S. potatorum occurs, but is not abundant. I looked out for cases where the seeds were used for precipitating muddy water, but failed to find an instance of its use in this direction.

Of the Gentianaceæ, *Exacum zeylanicum* occurs in fields, but the flowers are much paler than in wet-country examples.

Of the Boraginaceæ, *Cordia myza* is fairly common. *Tournefortia argentea* occurs on the seashore, but is not plentiful. *Heliotropium indicum* is very common in waste ground.

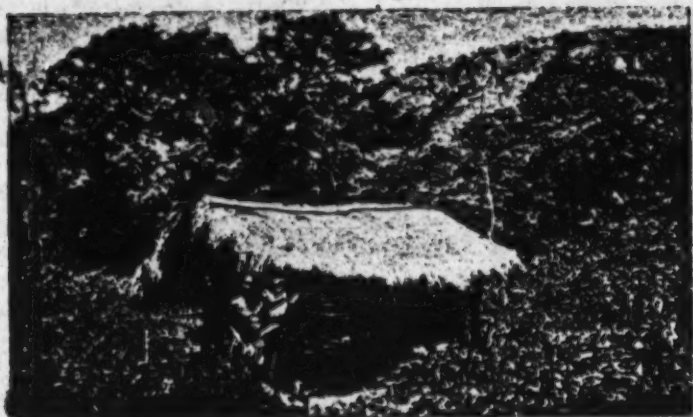
Of the Solanaceæ, mention need only be made of *Datura fastuosa*, which appears in nearly all the more established gardens. The various "Battus" I can pass over, as being common all over the Ceylon low-country, and as probably introduced.

Of the Scrophulariaceæ I desire to draw attention to only one, *Centranthera procumbens*, owing to its presence in a dry country being remarkable. I found it on two occasions only, first between Nangalla and Danakiriya, and the second time about five miles south of Liyangolla. On both these occasions I asked the villagers if they could name it, but without success. Its presence is singular, as it is generally to be found only in the wet zone, or in a country where extremes of drought are not experienced.

Of the Bignoniaceæ, *Oroxylum indicum* is moderately common, but I think there is little doubt that it was introduced for the sake of its medicinal value. *Dolichandrone rheedii* occurs near the coast, near standing water. *Stereospermum chelonoides* is fairly common. Its wood was used by the Veddas for bows.

Of the Pedaliaceæ, *Petalum murex* is common near the coast, and is used by both the Sinhalese and Tamils for a demulcent. *Martynia diandra* occurs on the fringes of villages

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342



Poromola's lonely home

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411



Vedda bowman of Dambana

[Facing p. vi]

- 123 We had hardly gained the base of the rock when we heard human voices and soon came up with three men and their dogs. One fellow
 ● [411] carried a gun, the others had axes hitched to their shoulders. They
 412 were on their way to a devil dancing ceremony at a house of illness some miles away; but abandoning their project they accompanied us to their homes.

621 In a small clearing stood half a dozen leafy shelters. Outside one of
 [342] these, three women with infants at the breast were seated roasting small yellow flowers. The rest of their people were at work on a *chena** close by. We summoned them and soon we had all the Veddas of the *Kosgaha*
 [162] *Ulpotta* before us—some six or eight men and about a dozen women and
 [164] children. They were a poor lot bearing the stigmata of malaria and
 [146] framboesia. There was but one old man among them. The children were emaciated and languid.

144 Most of them showed strong traces of Tamil admixture, especially
 177 the women; what poor ornaments they wore, their clothing, and even their very names were Tamil; and so were their predilections if the
 coy smiles one or two of them bestowed on the fine Tamil that accompanied us signified anything. There were at least three men, however, true to

142 Vedda type—short of stature, wild-eyed, with beardless face and up-
 standing frizzly hair.

411 They had no bows among them, except as playthings for the children,
 524 but made us one as a memento and stained it with charcoal and *thimbiri* to give it the appearance of use.

342 The huts were fashioned of wattle and leaves, and thatched with dry
 415 grass. Their domestic appointments comprised earthen pots, a wooden pestle and mortar, bark rope, and a deer skin or two.

262 Fruits, flowers, wild yams, honey, the flesh of animals, *kurrukhant*
 224 and maize formed their food. The meat they fancied most was that of
 231 the langur and monitor lizard which they hunted with the lazy mongrels
 264 that loitered about. They eat abundantly and at any hour when food
 261 is plentiful; but as a rule one good meal a day is all they expect; in
 415 times of dearth they bear hunger stoically, chewing incessantly a few
 221 varieties of bark they carry in pouches fashioned of cloth saturated with
 222 melted wax (*ilee rethee*). Partial nomads, they spend many months
 of the year under trees and in caves. Where the *palu*, *veera*, *kong*, or
mora† fruit is ripe, where the hives are, there they take their women and
 children, dogs, and chattels and go.

515 "How often do you bathe?" I asked one of them, the smell of their
 ring-wormed bodies suggesting little acquaintance with water.

"What bathing for us," he replied. "We fall into a stream once in a way and get out again; that is our bath. And we only do that when our stomachs are full. When we are hungry we don't care for anything; we can eat even a man then!"

904 In answer to the question how they measured distances and what
 [276] constituted a mile, the reply was, "We walk till our legs hurt, then we place our axes on the ground, sit down, take out our pouches, and chew a quid; that is our mile".

[137]

*A patch of forest cleared for cultivation

†*Eleusine coracana*

‡*Minusops hexandra*, *Hemicystia sepiaria*, *Schleichera trijuga*, *Nephetium longana*, respectively.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945

AX5 Vedda AX5

142
411
211
[412]
[482]
622



The best of the Hennebedde Veddas.—Poromola and Handuna (Page 16)



Handuna strings his bow (Page 16)

[Facing p. 16]

2. FOREST CHILDREN

621 THE village of Potuliyadda lies in the heart of the country of the Henebedde Veddas. We had hoped to take these people unawares in their homes some three miles away; but it was not to be; for a Vedda boy who had witnessed our arrival had forestalled us.

We were at lunch, when my friend, whose seat commanded a view of the jungle, quietly remarked, "Hullo; who are these? Veddas without a doubt."

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[411]
[622] Five men, armed with bows, arrows and axes, strode in single file under the leadership of a small one-eyed man, half of whose face was covered by an awful scar which puckered an eyeless socket, giving a touch of pathos to an otherwise harsh expression. Such was Poromola, chief of the Henebedde Veddas also called *Walaha* (bear) for obvious reasons. Then there was Handuna a fine type of wild man; though close on fifty his figure was well-knit, and this combined with his goatee beard and tousy head gave a strength and rugged dignity to his bearing. There were also a tall bearded man of forty, loquacious and sophisticated enough when you knew him; a lanky, slouching, beady-eyed fellow; a robust, curly-haired bumpkin; and lastly, the snub-nosed little mischief-maker to whom we owed the honour of this visit.

123 As the Veddas came up to us, they uttered some fierce jargon we did not understand. It was pretty obvious they were acting; and not caring to encourage them in this, I casually motioned them away. They retired mumbling. We recalled them later to find them in dudgeon, evidently not being used to such treatment. They stared mutely at us affecting not to understand a word of the Sinhalese in which I addressed them. I tried again and again, but not by the flicker of an eyelid did they signify comprehension. Civility and persuasion having failed, I tried the effect of candour, telling them that we were not gullible strangers and knew all about them. This also was without effect.

Opening Seligmann's book, which contained the portraits of these very Veddas taken ten years previously, we suited picture to prototype. They gazed uncritically with stolid intentness showing no surprise or enthusiasm. I asked them whether they remembered the author and his wife who had spent so much time with them and been so kind to them. One nodded, and the others' faces betrayed interest. Thus was the first barrier carried.

Gradually we won them over one by one; but despite our best efforts the conversation flagged. And we, tired of making all the advances simulated an indifference we far from felt, and took to our books.

"We are hungry," said Handuna after a while. "Will you not give us food?"

We could only offer them money, an almost useless thing to the Vedda. We had made the serious mistake of coming unprovided with a surplus of rice, betel, arecanut and tobacco; for the surest way to the heart of the Vedda is through his stomach. We

142
291
482
854



Handuna's household. (Page 15)

142
291
224
411
482



Hennebedde Veddas (Page 16)



The iguana hunter. (Page 17)

[Facing p. 17]

FOREST CHILDREN

19

turned in like a child's, fell to my share. I was contemplating the proposition with disgust, when, to my surprise, I saw my companion bravely tackling his; he recommended the meat as savoury. Not to be outdone, I gingerly followed his example, remembering that the nearer the bone the cleaner the flesh. While our chauffeur not only refused his share, but turned away with green-visaged disgust at the behaviour of his masters. The Veddas meanwhile applied themselves heartily to the meal, crunching hungrily bones and all; the brain and liver they regarded as special delicacies. 262

Our next course was a fragment of *Aurum* cake garnished with a pungent *sambol*; this was a more feasible dish—but for the sand one crunched with every bite. A handful of honey-comb brought the dreadful meal to a welcome close. It did not occur to our hosts that water for cleansing would be acceptable; a procedure they ignored, wiping their hands instead on the posts of the hut, their own bodies, or filthy loin-rags. The chatty in which they brought us water could no more stand on its base than an egg. 515

So far we had seen none of their women, but had heard subdued female voices in the adjoining room, and surprised the glint of dark inquisitive eyes between the bark-slats. It required no little persuasion to bring them out. Even to pose for their portraits these people wanted presents! There was not a woman among them who had the remotest pretensions to comeliness; what little of it they might possess, their graceless rags disguised. 123

About a half-mile from Handuna's hut were the dwellings of the one-eyed Poromola and the sophisticated Kaira. We found the former disconsolately seated in his airy shed, with a little child on his lap, no less wistful than its grandsire. Patiently they awaited the return of the old man's wife and daughter, with the handful of grain they would earn for the day by working on a *chena*. 361 464 465

We secured some bows and arrows of fine workmanship here, and an *ande* which we mistook for a large arrow-head; but Kaira taking it said, "This is what we dance with," and suiting the action to the word, twirled the implement, tang and point, between his fingers, or shouldered it gun-wise, while he performed the shuffling semi-circular movements of a Vedda dance. 411 535

Thus ended our visit to Henebedde. That night, as we lay in bed, we heard a Vedda stave shouted lustily into the dark. It came from the watcher of a neighbouring field on his lonely look-out, and served as a variant to the "hoos" with which he kept away foraging animals. The refrain, *Ma mini, ma mini, ma deyya*, (Oh! great man, oh! great man, oh! great God) told of soul-hunger even in a people so primitive. We took it for a token of hail and farewell from the land of the Veddas. 241 533

Embillene's only claim to a name lay in the open *ambalam* (travellers' lodge), built high on strong posts that elephants might pass through without being tempted to destroy it. Here we found a team of pack-bulls and their drovers. The head of the *tavalam** was a loquacious fellow who took the whole forest into his confidence. People as a rule talk quietly in the jungle, subconsciously respecting, as it were, its solemnity; not so these drovers; their discourse is high-pitched, from 600

*Team of pack bulls.

VEDDAS AND SHERINES

V 38
136 to something; but it was long before I saw the bird, a veritable leaf
825 among the leaves and more motionless than they.

S
539 The hilly jungles of central Ceylon echo, during certain seasons of the year, to this bird's incessant cry, the popular onomatopoeic renderings of which are, in English, "Captain Philpotts" and "Bring the tappal" and in Sinhalese "*Botuahappan*." Most people have heard, but very few seen, the shy author of these dolorous notes. There is a gruesome story associated with the bird:—A Sinhalese king once asked his dhoby, in order to test his marital fidelity, whether he would cut his wife's neck and bring him her head: *Oh! king, said the man sitting at the monarch's feet, "even if you behead me I cannot do such a thing."* The following day the king called up the dhoby's wife and made a similar request of her. She replied that she would do it. Going home she helped her husband with his bath, rubbed boiled limes on his head, and cooked him a good meal. Like a good wife she asked him to lay his head on her lap where he soon fell asleep. Then, with a knife she had in readiness, she cut his throat; and severing his neck, put the head into a pot, covered it with a cloth and carried it to the king. On the way she met a man who, singing, asked her, "What do you carry in the pot on your head?"

"I am taking *mes amba** to the king," answered the woman.

"Why cover it so carefully?" sang he.

"If I take them uncovered, wayfarers will ask me for them," she replied. "It is on a fine journey I go."

When she brought her gift to the king, he was incensed at her cruelty, and ordered her head to be struck off instantly. Ever after, has she gone about in the form of this bird, crying *botua-happan* (cut the throat), as her one refrain.

000 While making our way through a tree-studded glade, we surprised two men carrying sacks of dried meat on their shoulders; through rents in the bags peeped unsavoury scraps of sambur, monkey and pig. Their first impulse on seeing us was to escape; for to shoot sambur legitimately, gun and game licences are necessary; and what money have they for these, who have barely the wherewithal to purchase the ammunition for their ramshackle muzzle-loaders.

V
533 When we camped, Kombua regaled us with Vedda songs of questionable taste chanted rapidly in a high nasal monotone, lengthened indefinitely by endless repetition, and accompanied in the last staves with a clapping of hands. To the suggestion that he should show his skill in archery he responded with alacrity; jumping up, he seized his weapons as if confident of skill. A fragment of paper, six inches square, placed fifteen paces away, was the mark. At the word he loosed his arrow. A clean miss! He walked up to the target and dashed it down in dudgeon, and nothing would induce him to shoot again. Archery is a lost art to the Veddas, though they still have considerable skill in fashioning bows and arrows. Jungles that echo to guns are no places for bowmen.

V
576 Kombua's farewell was as bizarre as his greeting of us. Tossing head and hands in the direction we were taking, and tapping us on the chest, he wished us good going in tones more peremptory than complaisant.

V
515 Quite a number of our carriers were half-Veddas. There was one whose constant occupation was to run his fingers comb-fashion through his upstanding hair scraping out vermin. His expression was of that thoughtful seriousness which is the surest mark of profound vacuity.

*A species of mango.

GIPSY HAUNTS

55

triangle bounded on the south by the Gal Oya; on the west by the Bibile-Batticaloa road; and on the east by the coast road. Within this space are found the Veddas of Danigala, Henebedda and Bingoda, besides the few about Kotelinda, Divulana and Serangumadu. If to this tract were added that to the west and north of the Bibile-Batticaloa road, between it and the Mahaweli-ganga, we shall have embraced the Veddas of Bintenne, Gunner's Quoin, and other scattered settlements, and accounted for every Vedda extant—a mere handful of people in all.

Kaurala of Kotelinda was the first Vedda worthy of the name we had encountered on this long journey. He was a Bingoda Vedda of the Morana *warags*, but had spent most of his days at Bandaradua now derelict. He lived with his family in a crude hut in the jungle; his sole weapons were an axe, a bow and arrows. He was a simple soul, laughing upcrariously at one moment, and the next assuming that troubled gravity so characteristic of his race. He knew every inch of his jungles; there was no tree, stream, or stone once passed which he could not instantly recognise again. This instinct and the sun were his sole means of orientation. We tried to press him into service, but he refused. "How can I come?" he said, tossing head and arms like a windmill. "I am a lone man. I live in the jungle. I am only a Vedda. If I go, who is there to look after my children? See here, now," pointing to the damaged trees about his hut; "this is what the *botehendes** have done. How can I come?"

Our deviation to Kotelinda was in vain. We had hoped to cut across the hills of Madana to Galmade; but the path had long been absorbed into the forest. We had therefore to double back to Bokkebedda, and thence strike north, through Gonagalla, to Divulana. With our usual ill-luck on this trip, we caught our fifth thunderstorm. It dropped plumb on us and worried us all the way; while in the unscathed beyond, over the treed parkland, the sunset wrought a panorama of opal and pearl, touching to glory the austere peak of Friar's Hood, queen of the distant hills.

*Elephants.

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Kaurata and his wife. (Page 55)

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A Galmede house. (Page 60)

[Facing p. 59]

CHAPTER VI VEDDAS OF BINGODA

I. BINGODA HOMES

*Innumerable years had flown,
Since first the chisel in her hand
Necessity, the sculptor, took,
And in her spacious meaning planned
These forms, and that eternal look.*

L. BINYON

[197] CONCEDE me three points and I shall attempt to show that there exist
[101] in Ceylon to-day Veddas worthy of the name. Language, apparel and weapons are the concessions I ask.

Let us begin by confessing, that the Veddas we shall tell of have no pure language of their own, but merely a patois, in which Sinhalese words predominate and Vedda words are few; their clothing is not the traditional
291 leaf or threshed *riti* bark, but fragments of foul rag affording, if anything, less cover; the weapons they favour are guns (of a type almost as dangerous to user as to quarry) and not bows and arrows which they
● 411 employ only in sore necessity.

Vital issues, you will say, which should deprive this people of their name. But language, dress and arms may change without materially altering, for a time at least, ancient customs and primeval instincts.

101 The word Vedda originally meant hunter; and a people supreme in jungle-craft, always capable of gleaning from the unfriendly forests a sufficiency for their needs and utterly incompetent to husband even the primitive agriculture of the *chena*, has surely a claim to the name.

224 It must not be supposed that every Vedda possesses a gun; far from it; occasionally there may be a single weapon to a whole clan. The usual
[411] thing is for the Sinhalese or Moors to lend their guns to these superb
[427] trackers, who never waste a shot and seldom return without their quarry, a large share of which goes by agreement to the owner of the gun.

114 Of my first accidental meeting with these Veddas amid the hills of Galmede, I have already told. Barely four months had elapsed before I found myself renewing their acquaintance; this time with set purpose.

Arriving at the forest village of Mullegama, sacred to Buddhists, and abounding in lime groves and Moors, I was fortunate enough to run up against my friend Kaurala of Kottelinde, who, so difficult of acquisition before, now became our willing guide.

[31] Bingoda, the home of our Veddas, is some three miles from Mullegama, and lies on the Dhungolla Oya, a tributary of the Magalavatan Aar which connects Bingoda with Galmede ten miles away—all in the circuit of

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Method of measuring length of arrow shaft. (Page 76)

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Feathering the arrow. (Page 76)

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VEDDA ARTS AND A DANCE

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sticks are easily obtainable from broken branches scattered everywhere. Gama, who was entrusted with the demonstration, chose two twigs, one the thickness of the index finger and about a foot and a half long, the other as thick as the little finger and about ten inches long. Having barked these, he whittled down the centre of the larger stick, and, in the flat surface thus produced, scooped out a shallow cavity, at one border of which he contrived a V-shaped extension. A piece of cloth about two inches square was placed on the ground under the centre of the stick which was held firmly down, cavity uppermost, by the toes of the operator, aided by the hands of an assistant. The smaller stick was then placed vertically over the other—its point, rendered bluntly conical, engaging in the cavity—and briskly rotated between the open palms. The firm downward pressure with which these movements were accompanied, caused the palms to descend the length of the stick from time to time. As often as this happened, the hands were quickly disengaged and re-applied as before to the upper part, and the twirling manoeuvre repeated. This had been done but twice when smoke was seen. Soon a small heap of charred dust like coffee-grounds accumulated round the hole, to escape down the V-shaped gutter on to the cloth. The smoke increased; there was a smell of charred wood. Suddenly a spark was thrown on to the black dust and the rag caught fire. A few dry leaves were collected and set alight. Within two minutes of the commencement of the operation there was a lively fire. When the smoke is observed to come from the accumulated dust, apart from that at the point of contact between the two sticks, it is a sign that the object is achieved. The rag is then rolled to enclose the dust—cigarette-fashion—and blown into at one end, so that it soon smokes heavily and catches fire.

It is strange that an art so simple in adept hands (not by any means so in those of a novice) should have been allowed to fall into disuse in wild Ceylon. I have seen refinements of this method; a coconut-shell, flat stone, or skull of a small animal for instance, being used by an assistant to press down the vertical stick, and a twist of bark to rotate it but they were less effectual than the simple procedure I have described.

ARCHERY

The present day Veddas, we have seen, are poor bowmen; they have, however, not yet quite lost the art of fashioning superb bows and arrows.

The bow is made from the *mahakakala-gaha* or the *kobawela*; the stone-bow (*gal-dhunna*) from the *gatawela-gaha*; the bow string from the inner sheath of the bark of *aralu-wel*.*

The size of the bow is proportioned to the archer's strength. I have seen one six and a half feet long and as thick as a child's wrist; and, judging from its drawing power, no hand but a giant's could have wielded it. The usual length of a bow is from five and a half feet to five feet ten inches. It is made of a single stave, thick at the centre, without contrivance to give grip, flattened along the back, and tapering towards the horns which, without being notched, are tightly encircled by a few turns of cord to prevent the string slipping.

The arrow is made from the *ee* or *relang*† tree, the wood of which when dry is of remarkable lightness. A straight twig the girth of the finger

**Terminalia chebula*.†*Pterospermum suberifolium*.

5: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945

AX5 Veda AX5

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Stringing bow by foot-thrust. (Page 76)



Stringing bow with aid of knee. (Page 76)

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322 is taken, barked, and straightened by being passed rapidly a few times
411 through a flame, and then bent over the knee or between the hands. It is shaved down to uniform thickness with an arecanut-cutter or arrow blade, and cut to suitable length, roughly gauged by holding it along the outstretched arm from the nearer nipple to the end of the middle finger, giving it an average measure of two and a half feet, or slightly less. An arrow belonging to the great bow I have mentioned, measured three and a half feet. The nock or notch is a quarter of an inch deep and cut square.

411 The arrow is feathered with the wing plumes of the owl, devil-bird,
237 jungle-cock, or large crane (*mans koka*); the owl's, besides being the
284 best, are easily picked up along dry stream beds, on the trees bordering which the birds usually roost. A feather is split unequally down the rachis, only the larger segment being used. Four such segments, about two inches long, are arranged equidistantly round the shaft, an inch and a quarter from the end, and bound neatly down with *aralu* fibre, the mouth helping in the process. The first turns are merely taken round that part of the shaft, which is immediately below the feathers, then round the bared lower ends of the rachis, and then carried along, at spaced intervals, between the carefully separated barbs. Should a strand not prove long enough, it is finished off by having its end tucked in between rachis and shaft, and another is similarly begun. Finally the ruffled barbs are straightened out between the thumb and fingers moistened with saliva. A few turns of fibre just below the notch serve to give grip to the drawing fingers.

411 The arrow-head is made of flattened iron obtained from local blacksmiths. It is three to five inches long, of lanceolate shape in imitation of the *na* leaf, and sharp at the edges; serving as much as a cutting implement as an arrow. By a tang it is let into the end of the shaft to which it is firmly secured with fibre. All the strung parts of the arrow, as well as the bow-string, are finally dressed with the sticky milk of [824] *kiri-wel* to prevent untwisting. Both bow and arrow, being very liable to the ravages of boring insects, are always kept hung over the smoke when not in use.

The method of stringing the bow is by placing one end of it, to which the string is knotted, on the ground, and then pressing on its centre either with the bent knee or by a foot thrust. A correctly strung bow should measure at its centre a span between string and belly of bow; this is rather more than the "fist-mele" (clenched fist with thumb upright) the rough estimate of European stringing.

The arrow release favoured by the Veddas is that in which the cord is drawn with the first joints of the index and middle fingers, the arrow being usually placed on the left of the bow. The style of archery is often peculiar: the arrow fitted to the bow is raised head high; the right elbow is now swung up in an awkward flourish above the head, and then brought slowly down to alignment with the eye, as the string is drawn out to its fullest extent and the arrow delivered.

DANCING

177 The ceremonial dances of the Veddas have been minutely described
535 and illustrated by Seligmann. The dance we are about to describe seems to have been performed before him in its greatest purity at Venebedde. The differences between his description and ours must be

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Boundary tree marked with bow mark or
dhuna hena. (Page 79)

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A Veda archer of Hintenne. (Page 76)

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AXS Vedda AXS

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Veddas of Bulugahadena. (Page 95)

● [411]



Veddas of Bulugahadena. (Page 95)

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5: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945

AX5 Vedda AX5

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The finest Vedda we saw in Birtenne. (Page 93)

[Facing p. 95]

BINTENNE

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interfusion of Vedda blood—the apathetic look, the scanty beard, were unmistakably there. The area we had to traverse was not extensive, hemmed in, as it was, by the Bibile-Maha Oya road on the one hand and Mahaweli on the other. It is five miles from Alutnuwara to Arawatta ; six miles from that to the Ulhitiya Oya ; thence seven to Beligalla which is within four to six miles of Bulugahadena and Dambana, the Vedda haunts of to-day. The going is through forest comparatively well peopled; and *chenas* are frequently met with ; changing from year to year, these often absorb the path and obliterate it, causing deviations which lead astray even guides conversant with the country a few months previously.

We were nearing Bulugahadena when we met our first Vedda of these parts—a tall, picturesque fellow with ear-rings, shouldering his bow-stave with a small gourdful of honey slung on its end. Unspoilt, reserved and natural, in contrast to his fellows whom we afterwards met, he was the finest Vedda we saw in Bintenne.

In an environment, not of virgin forest, but of derelict *chenas* we found the Veddas of Bulugahadena. They lived scattered about, a hut or two to each *chena*, and not in groups as one so often sees ; the explanation we were given for this was not the obvious one that *chenas* were apparently easier of acquisition here than elsewhere, but that it served to keep the families apart and prevent social entanglements, Veddas being very jealous of their women.

There was no reserve about these people. As we approached each hut, the men, armed with axes, bows and arrows, came out and greeted us vociferously in the Vedda language ; Sinhalese they affected not to know. Their women were mostly sullen and silent ; but one at least gave us a better reception than her husband did. Here and there a sickly wretch craved for medicine.

Their huts, made of bark slats and wattle, were too well built for Vedda habitations ; they had not that crudity and unkemptness so characteristic of the huts of the wilder Veddas, and most of them were finished off with a neat fence-work. There was no lack of *kurrukhan* and maize here ; and on the whole they seemed a fairly prosperous and contented community.

The Veddas of Dambana, who lived four miles away, were much the same as those of Bulugahadena ; and so were the others we met scattered about these jungles. One lot we found picturesquely grouped in a rock-shelter, reproducing to perfection the old cave life ; but they were obviously there for our benefit !

Of these Veddas, considered as a whole, we may say that we had never before seen so many of them as on this short trip of barely a week. On previous journeys, after having traversed miles and miles of jungle, we had met only a Vedda here and a Vedda there, never more than a dozen in all, often but one or two. But in Bintenne we saw no less than about fifty good specimens. Though they were obviously sophisticated by their nearness to Badulla, and the many occasions on which their representatives had been on show, Vedda blood is still strong in Bintenne. This is the place to come to if one wishes to pick up the few words that are left of the Vedda language, and the art of making bows and arrows ; but apart from that, these people are too civilised to be interesting.

One episode we experienced here is worth recalling. Two Veddas, better disposed towards us than the rest, one with his lip all askew from

18: Kleiweg de Zwaan E-5 (1906-1910) 1925 OBI Indonesië

Vedda AX5

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Fig. 16. Veddas from the Nilgala District (Ceylon)

Photo R. Martin.

18: Kietweg de Zwaan E-5 (1906-1910) 1925 OBI Indonesia

Yelda AX5



Fig. 17. Veddahs of the Nilgala Region

Photo Fr. Sarasin.

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